



# Tips For Businesses To Help Schools Succeed



*By 2010, South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal, we must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country.*

The issues, needs and challenges facing schools are varied and depend upon the economic and social well-being of the communities they serve. Schools that serve a large number of children from low socioeconomic households have different challenges than schools that serve children from middle to upper income households. In each case, however, involvement from the entire community is needed to create real and lasting improvements in student achievement.

The business community must be involved in helping all students achieve. Educators cannot do it alone. Business leaders can help provide educators with the skills and knowledge they need to embrace and manage change. Likewise, business leaders have a vested interest in the quality of education provided in their community to ensure a quality workforce for the future. Bringing both business and educators to the table for discussion must occur if South Carolina is going to become one of the five fastest improving education states in the nation. The school and district report cards provide an opportunity to begin the conversation. Here are some ways businesses can get involved in helping schools succeed:

## **Building A Relationship**

- Arrange a meeting after the start of the school year with school or district administrators and other interested business leaders to form a Business Education Communications Team. The

team could meet monthly for a brown bag luncheon or a sponsored breakfast, alternating the meeting site between a business and a school. Use the one-hour meetings to allow each party to talk about challenges or successes. Keep the dialogue simple at first. Once the relationship is established and trust is gained, the tougher questions and issues raised on the report cards will be much easier to handle.

- Volunteer the expertise and guidance of company employees to help a school or district positively communicate the results of its report card to the general public.
- Arrange a school neighborhood bus tour for business leaders and educators. Use the tour to view the students' living conditions or to see if there are any support services or programs in the neighborhood such as a public library or recreation center. End the tour in a meeting room at a school to discuss what each person learned and the need for action.
- Create a Teacher-For-A-Day Program in which members of the company's management team trade places with classroom teachers at a school. The program presents an opportunity to strengthen the lines of communication, participants will gain a better appreciation for one another's jobs and students will get a taste of what the business world is about and a sense that they can join it. Remember, in some neighborhoods, the most successful business person is the local drug dealer.
- Create a Principal- or Superintendent-For-A-Day Program in which the company CEO trades places with a school principal for the day.
- Volunteer use of the company outdoor billboards to showcase schools.

# Planning for High Achievement and Assisting with School Change

- Encourage company leaders to serve on school boards.
- Facilitate communication between school districts and other community agencies through service on community agency boards and commissions.
- Serve on a school district strategic planning team or a School Improvement Council.
- Assist school districts in studying school and community policies and governance issues as related to their effectiveness in supporting higher student achievement.
- Assist school districts in planning for present and future facility and equipment needs.
- Study the state's curriculum standards to create a Classroom Speakers Bureau made up of company employees who can speak to students about their jobs and how their jobs relate to the standards. For example, an engineer can talk about how math and science information and skills are used on the job. A sales person can explain how English/language arts and social studies apply to sales.
- Invite educators to attend corporate training seminars during the summer months or weekends on issues such as time management, communications or dealing with change.
- Loan corporate executives in marketing, research or finance departments to work with schools.
- Use sample Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) questions as trivia questions during employee social activities. This is a good way to educate employees about the rigor of the curriculum standards.

## Involving Parents and Others

- Work with the Adult Education Program to provide literacy courses to employees at a community center or in a space at the work site.
- Provide publications to employees on ways parents can help their children succeed in school.
- Provide a space at the work site for teachers to meet with parents for conferences about their child's academic progress.



## Supporting Students

- Participate and encourage other businesses to support the School-To-Work Program by offering summer internships and apprenticeships to high school students.
- Provide release time for employees to attend parent-teacher conferences or special parent meetings at the school.
- Participate in Job Shadowing Day (held on Groundhog Day) in which children of employees can shadow their mom or dad at work. Most school guidance counselors will have information about this event.
- Sponsor an exhibit at a school science fair demonstrating your company products and use it again for classroom or school speaking engagements.
- Encourage employees to volunteer as reading tutors to students who are not reading at grade level.
- Donate your company's old computers or office supplies/equipment to schools, and provide technical support.
- Donate part or all of the company's newspaper advertisements to showcase award-winning students or programs to the community.
- Partner with schools to implement a School Supply Drive for needy students. This drive could take place before the start of the school year or around the Thanksgiving holidays through December when students return from the holidays.

## Rewarding Success

- Recognize employees who have gone back to school to earn a high school diploma or college degree.
- Create a work site bulletin board to showcase students, especially those who are children of employees, who have achieved academic awards or honors. Use clippings of articles from a school or local newspaper citing student honors or accomplishments.
- Sponsor a company academic award, and present the award to the student during a school program.
- Create a scholarship fund for students who exemplify many of the company's work values and achievement.
- Provide space in the company newsletter to publicize student or school awards and honors.
- Provide school principals with gift certificates for services or goods from your business to recognize outstanding teachers or staff members.
- Work with other businesses to sponsor a community event to recognize Teachers of the Year, Support Staff of the Year and other outstanding employees in each school.



**South Carolina Education Oversight Committee**

PO Box 11867  
Blatt Building, Room 227  
Columbia, SC 29211  
(803) 734-6148

**[www.sceoc.org](http://www.sceoc.org)**